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Former Defense Aide Supports U.S. Program

Great Military Striking Power Keeps
Nation Safe Now, Says George W. Vaughan

BY MARVIN MILES, Space-Aviation Editor

"Nobody is gambling with the nation's survival!"

This emphatic statement came from George W. Vaughan who recently returned here from a year's Pentagon service as assistant secretary of defense for legislative affairs.

"The U.S. today has such great military power and long-range striking capability that no nation or combination of nations could afford to attack us," Vaughan said. "This judgment is based on the known state of our own forces and an assessment of the existing USSR forces."

The motor company executive acknowledged that if the United States were to remain static without improving its military strength "the USSR could seriously challenge us."

Improving Posture

"However," he said, "we are continually improving our military posture. New weapon systems are being added. Effectiveness is being improved. Our strategic weapons, combined with our deployed military services and our allies assure that there is and will be no deterrent gap."

Vaughan added that the present program provides the amount of military power required for national security, but added that new developments can change the picture — a change in the threat of a technological break-through.

"I'm sure," he said, "that the Department of Defense would never hesitate to recommend increases when events warrant."

Sneak Attack

He was asked if a sneak attack by 150 Russian ICBMs and 150 IRBMs could destroy America's ability to counterattack.

"I would say," he answered, "that any implication that our total deterrent strength would be so vulnerable is unrealistic. This hypothesis is based on a number of assumptions:

"It assumes (1) that our strategic retaliatory forces would all be located at 100 unprotected fixed bases at whatever time in the future the Russians had the prescribed number of missiles and that the Russians would know the exact location of each of these bases.

No Information

"It assumes (2) that they could prepare to launch all these missiles — in other words go to war — without any intelligence of this being acquired by the free world.

"It assumes (3) that they could launch all of these complex missiles with such success and such accuracy that they would land on targets simultaneously in many parts of the world — with no warning.

"The hypothesis ignores, among other factors, the uncertainties of warning, accuracy, reliability and salvo capabilities — and the state of our forces at any given hour.

Ignores Submarines

"Moreover it ignores the polaris submarines which will begin to deploy this fall, each equipped with 16 nuclear missiles; the nuclear aircraft carriers which are now being deployed at sea and the Navy's fleet of ballistic missile submarines which will be deployed in the near future."

ring system — we will have some of this warning capability. The fact is, we have our capability to institute an airborne alert. The former assistant secretary was asked if he felt a U.S. should maintain a nuclear airborne alert by strategic bombers and bombers.

His reply:

"A considerable portion of our strategic bombers are held in a position of ground alert — able to take off at 15-minute warning. This would provide an adequate measure of immunity from surprise attack in the face of the current airborne threat.

"The danger of attack without warning will increase as missiles become available. We must be ready to adjust to it in order to maintain our deterrent capability and one action we could take would be to keep a sizable number of bombers continuously airborne at such times as the Joint Chiefs of Staff see a need for such action.

Conflicts and Confusion

"Some \$140 million has been provided to prepare for this alert capability this year and \$90 million more is in the new budget. Additional money would be made available if needed. However, the Joint Chiefs of Staff confirm that there is no need for an airborne alert at this time."

To questions about conflicts and confusion in intelligence estimates, Vaughan answered:

"Neither Gen. Twining (JCS chairman) nor Defense Secretary Gates has been deprived of essential elements of intelligence.

"Knowledge available this year made it possible to introduce an additional factor in preparing the National Intelligence Estimate concerning Soviet ICBMs. In this year's estimates the intelligence community therefore presented one set of figures regarding numbers of Soviet ICBMs which reflected this factor.

"The Central Intelligence Agency recently prepared for Congress a chart that applied this factor to the figures of a year ago. Gen. Twining said he had not seen this chart. Actually he had seen it. Secretary Gates should have seen it.

application of this additional factor to last year's figure for the NIE for last year. The flow of intelligence information and its assessment by the intelligence experts is a continuous process. Our intelligence community has a solid record of seeking and interpreting the facts without fear or favor."

As for Nike-Zeus, the Army program to develop an anti-missile missile, Vaughan said the weapon has promise, but added that several exhaustive studies have provided only partial answers to certain significant doubts about the system.

"The Defense Department does not want to start a production program for a point defense system totaling many billions of dollars without greater confidence that it can contribute some solution to the missile defense problem," he said.

Need Better Answer

"Production of Nike-Zeus was not authorized because better answers are still needed. This is not a criticism. The weapon presents a difficult task. Research, development and test will continue at a high priority."

Vaughan agreed the U.S. is behind on large rocket boosters and in numbers of ICBMs, but emphasized that in all other areas, the U.S. leads the world.

"It would be absurd not to acknowledge where we are weak, as absurd as it would be to discount all the areas of our strength," he said.

"It seems only fair to consider the entire picture."

"This is what tells the story."